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RR RUEHBI RUEHCI  
DE RUEHCG #1857 2371140  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 251140Z AUG 06  
FM AMCONSUL CHENNAI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9455  
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1911  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0581  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 4838

UNCLAS CHENNAI 001857

SIPDIS

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NEW DELHI FOR PAO LSCHWARTZ AND RSO  
STATE FOR SCA/INS, SCA/PPD AND DS/IP/SCA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PINR ASEC KPAO IN

SUBJECT: PROTEST AT U.S. EXHIBIT IN CALICUT

REF: CHENNAI 476

¶1. ON AUGUST 23 IN CALICUT, ALSO KNOWN AS KOZHIKODE, IN NORTH KERALA NEARLY 100 MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT (NDF) SHOUTED ANTI-U.S. SLOGANS AT AN EXHIBIT STAGED BY CONSULATE GENERAL CHENNAI.

A HALF-HOUR BEFORE THE INAUGURATION OF THE MULTI-MEDIA EXHIBIT, WHICH WAS PART OF AN OUTREACH EFFORT OF POST'S AMERICAN INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER (AIRC), THE PROTESTERS SHOUTED SLOGANS ACCUSING THE USG OF KILLING INNOCENT PEOPLE IN PALESTINE AND LEBANON. PROTESTORS CARRIED A PLACARD SAYING, "YANKEES GO BACK."

¶2. THE DEMONSTRATION WAS PEACEFUL, DID NOT OBSTRUCT THE INAUGURAL PROGRAM, AND LASTED ONLY ABOUT 20 MINUTES. MORE THAN 100 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE INAUGURATION, AND THEY WERE NOT OBSTRUCTED BY THE PROTESTERS. THE PROTESTERS DID NOT REAPPEAR DURING THE SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS OF THE EXHIBIT.

¶3. AT THE TIME OF THE PROTEST, THE HEAD OF THE MALABAR CHRISTIAN COLLEGE, THE VENUE FOR THE EXHIBIT, REQUESTED POLICE SUPPORT, WHICH WAS DULY PROVIDED. POLICE WERE DEPLOYED OUTSIDE THE VENUE, AND AFTER THE PROGRAM, THE POLICE ESCORTED CONSULATE STAFF (ALL LOCALY ENGAGED) BACK TO THEIR HOTEL.

¶4. THE CONTENT OF THE EXHIBIT, WHICH WAS MERELY TO ADVERTISE THE AIRC'S LIBRARY SERVICES, WAS NOT THE CAUSE OF THE PROTEST. RATHER, THE NDF, AN ISLAMIST COMMUNAL ORGANIZATION, TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE PRESENCE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE USG TO REGISTER ITS OPPOSITION TO U.S. POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

¶5. IN HIS SPEECH AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY, RAGUNATH, FORMER PRESIDENT OF MALABAR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, SAID: "IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT PEOPLE HAVE STARTED OPPOSING THINGS EVEN BEFORE KNOWING WHAT THEY ARE OPPOSING. WE HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF OVER 5,000 YEARS WHILE THE U.S. HAS ONLY 500 YEARS. BUT THE U.S. IS WAY AHEAD OF US, AND IT IS IMPERATIVE TO KNOW WHY THEY ARE AHEAD."

HOPPER